

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-21 (Canceled).

22 (Currently Amended). An apparatus comprising:

a ~~silicon~~ substrate;

a barrier layer over said ~~silicon~~ substrate;

a trench etched into said substrate through said barrier layer;

a dielectric in said trench; and

a plurality of ions implanted into said dielectric layer and said barrier layer, said substrate being substantially free of said ions, said implanted dielectric having a higher etch rate than the unimplanted dielectric.

23 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the dielectric comprises silicon oxide.

24 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said dielectric is damaged by said implanted ions.

25 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said barrier layer is formed of silicon nitride.

26 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said ions are selected from the group consisting of silicon, carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen.

27 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the upper surface of said barrier layer and said dielectric are coplanar.